

BATTERED WOMEN'S SHELTER PROGRAM HISTORY

In July 1994, the Governor enacted the Battered Women Protection Act (BWPA) of 1994 (Assembly Bill (AB) 167, Chapter 140, Statutes of 1994; as amended by AB 801, Chapter 599, Statutes of 1994, as amended by AB 3483, Chapter 197, Statutes of 1996 (Refer to Appendix A1). The BWPA of 1994 provided for an annual appropriation of \$11.5 million for FY 1994-95 and FY 1995-96 to the Department of Health Services, MCAH Branch to implement the Battered Women Shelter Program (BWS), a comprehensive shelter-based services grant program to provide direct services to battered women and their children.

By October 15, 1994, DHS distributed \$5.75 million in Phase I funding to 86 existing shelters statewide which had been receiving state funds. Approximately \$27 million was allocated in Phase II funding via a competitive grant process for the 25-month grant period beginning June 1, 1995 and ending June 30, 1997 with the caveat that the grant period would end June 30, 1996 without additional funding. Through the Phase II funding process, 96 grants were awarded to expand or establish new shelter-based services, establish new shelters, and/or to develop innovative approaches and strategies that have the potential for replication.

Consistent with the key priorities of prevention, women's health and nonviolent communities, the Governor's 1996-97 Proposed Budget included an initiative to expand efforts to address domestic violence, including \$11.5 million to continue the BWS. The final negotiations, as reflected in the Budget Act of 1996, resulted in a permanent annual base budget of \$11.5 million to the BWS.

In 1996, the BWS saw a \$2.5 million permanent augmentation, for a total annual budget of \$14 million. Of the \$2.5 million, one half (\$1.25 million) was slated to expand direct services, and the remaining \$1.25 million to support community grants to develop new prevention projects. The augmentation funds were allocated through a competitive grant process (RFA #96-26306) for a 30-month grant period beginning January 1, 1997 and ending June 30, 1999.

In 1997 and 1998, additional permanent augmentations resulted in the current annual appropriation of \$21 million, which funds approximately 120 grants throughout the state to provide shelter-based services, community domestic violence prevention projects, regional teen needs assessments, public awareness campaigns, evaluation activities, and a range of technical assistance and training projects.

The DVS recognizes that the development of effective strategies to eliminate violence in California requires multi-agency and interdepartmental coordination of and collaboration on services and programs at the state level. In March of 1994, the first meeting of the Multi-Agency Domestic Violence Task Force was convened in order to exchange information, examine existing programs and

associated data sources toward the goal of coordinated state-level activities. This Task Force continues to meet several times each year.

Additionally, since the inception of the BWSP, the Department has received input and guidance from the Statewide Domestic Violence Advisory Council comprised of a broad base of experts in the field of domestic violence including Governor and Legislative appointees. The Council has provided invaluable insight into current and emerging issues, and strategies and priorities for the DVS statewide domestic violence program, which has resulted in a program more far reaching than the provision of emergency services for battered women and their children. The Council has supported the development of a comprehensive approach to addressing the problem of domestic violence in communities, and has endorsed the use of funds for prevention and evaluation activities. Its most valuable contribution to date has been the development and distribution of a key strategic policy document in the fall of 1998 entitled, Preventing Domestic Violence: A Blueprint for the 21st Century.

BACKGROUND

Domestic violence poses a serious health threat to women and is an urgent public health problem that crosses all levels of society. In California, domestic violence accounts for 21 percent of violent crime, and in almost three-quarters of the cases, weapons are involved. In 1995 California law enforcement received 246,000 DV-related calls, an increase from the 238,900 calls in 1993 but approximately 5,000 fewer than 1994. A total of 179 women died as a result of domestic violence.

Approximately 99.9 percent of assaults on women do not result in death, but often result in severe physical injury or emotional distress. Findings by the U.S. Surgeon General reveal that domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women between ages 15 and 44, more common than automobile accidents, muggings and rapes combined. Battered women are at risk of depression, attempting suicide and abusing alcohol and other drugs.

While domestic violence is not perpetrated exclusively by men, the overwhelming predominance of male violence against women establishes the primary focus for MCAH/DVS domestic violence prevention and intervention efforts. Men who witnessed parental violence as children are more likely to abuse their partners, repeating the cycle of violence. Violence is a learned behavior resulting from the interaction of many factors, but power and control are at the core of violence against women and children. Society tacitly accepts domestic violence, and until recently, has largely looked the other way, holding the victims somehow responsible, or deeming domestic violence a private matter.

Over the past twenty years, substantial progress has been made by domestic violence advocates in developing and implementing legal and law enforcement

protection, emergency shelter, and comprehensive services for battered women and their children. While state funding has nearly tripled, the problem of domestic violence continues at epidemic proportions. Communities are seeking new strategies to improve services and reduce fragmentation, to coordinate community resources and response, and to develop systematic prevention projects that make domestic violence socially unacceptable and reduce individual violent behaviors.